

*Fox News Sunday with Shannon Bream*

10/02/22

9:48:38 a.m.

5 minutes and 21 seconds

SHANNON BREAM: BREAM: It is the other issue that dominates headlines in the south, immigration. Security along the U.S./Mexico border remains a major but often under-reported challenge for the White House. It is also undeniably a political vulnerability for Democrats with Republicans seizing on the issue in midterms. Joining me now Fox correspondent Bill Melugin, who has been supporting and reporting nonstop from the border since nearly the start of the Biden administration.

BILL MELUGIN: Yes.

BREAM: It's great to have you here actually in Washington.

MELUGIN: It's good to be here in person.

BREAM: OK, so you've been chasing some folks around trying to get some answers this week.

MELUGIN: Yes.

BREAM: You had a question with the House speaker, Nancy Pelosi. Hear how -- here's how that went.

MELUGIN: Kevin McCarthy told us he essentially feels that you are holding House Democrats hostage from speaking out about the border crisis because of the way you whip on the House floor. How would you respond to that? And do you believe the border is secure?

HOUSE SPEAKER NANCY PELOSI (D-CA): Well, I believe that we have to have a secure border. And I think that we are trying to address -- the president is - has a plan to address that.

BREAM: She says we've got to have a secure border, and the president has a plan, but how have Democrats reacted as you've press them on this issue?

MELUGIN: It depends who we're talking to, right? A few of them won't even make eye contact with me when we are chasing them through the hallways. Others were pretty gracious with their time and talked to us. But, Nancy Pelosi, right there, as you just mentioned, she says, yes, we have to have a secure border, and the President has a plan, and he's working on it. What is the plan? I mean we're almost two years in now, right, and the numbers just keep getting worse. The administration keeps breaking their own records, right? Last year we set the record with 1.7 million illegal crossings, only to be broken this year, fiscal year 2022. We're at 2.1 million illegal crossings, and we still have another month left to go. So, yes, there were several Democrats who we approached and they wanted nothing to do with me or the topic of the border or immigration. Wouldn't make eye contact with me. Had nothing to say when we pressed them on it.

BREAM: And, to be fair, the White House has had something to say about your coverage. There has been some pushback on how you're covering things. How does it feel to sort of get scooped into the story sometimes?

MELUGIN: I'm going to let the noise go above my head. They apparently don't like the drone. They say our coverage is alarmist. Well, what's happening down there is alarming. There have been more than 1,300 migrants who have died down there since the beginning of fiscal year 2021. There have been almost 4 million people who have crossed the border illegally. There have been 266,000 unaccompanied migrant children who have arrived at that border. Some of them we've seen drown in the river. And just to put that in a visual for you, that's three Rose Bowls worth of unaccompanied children who have arrived at the border since President Biden took office. It's chaos down there. And it is alarmist. That's why we put the drone in the air, so you can see the amount of people coming across every single day. What's happening down there is out of control. People are dying every single day. And right now, Border Patrol agents feel like there's just not really any light on the horizon because there's no change in policy.

BREAM: Yes, we're asking them to do an incredibly, almost impossible job. Now, one of the Democrats who did talk to you is Congressman Henry Cuellar, because he is a Democrat down there in Texas. He is seen this firsthand. Here's a bit of your exchange.

CONGRESSMAN HENRY CUELLAR (D-TX): This is our administration, I'm a Democrat. And, you know, they need to understand, they own it now. They own it now and they have to take the steps to correct this, otherwise, you know, when are we going to see an end to this?

BREAM: And one of the things that you talked to him about is the DHS secretary's response in public versus maybe what he's saying in private or how he feels about this. What can you tell us about that conversation?

MELUGIN: Some really interesting comments that Henry Cuellar made. Essentially, he said he has had conversation with Secretary Mayorkas, where the secretary has told him, look, I know what's happening down there is out of control. It's getting worse. It's not OK. But there's not a whole lot I can do about it because immigration activists have kind of been in the White House and they are the ones calling the shots right now. So, Henry Cuellar essentially says, Mayorkas feels like he's got to kind of zip it and just - just deal with it as the White House moves forward with their plan. And remember, last year we got leaked audio of Mayorkas. He was talking to border patrol agents in McAllen, in private, behind closed doors. What did he tell them when he thought nobody was listening? We're losing. This is unsustainable. If the border is our first line of defense, we are going to lose. The numbers have gotten worse since those comments, but he goes out to the American public and says, the border is secure, and he testifies under oath that we have operational security of the border. Those are two separate things.

BREAM: Can you tell us about your conversation with Kevin McCarthy too, because Republicans, when they've been in charge, haven't solved this either. A quick comment about your conversation with him.

MELUGIN: Yes, that's absolutely true. And Republicans have had control of Congress. They haven't pushed any immigration legislation that make any significant progress. Neither have the Democrats now. I sat down with Kevin McCarthy on Friday and he essentially said he believes if Nancy Pelosi were out of the way right now, that they could work on bipartisan immigration with Democrats. He feels that there are Democrats on the House floor who know what's happening at the border is unacceptable, who want to work with Republicans on it, but they feel they're kind of held hostage, or told to be quiet, by Nancy Pelosi. Don't speak out about it. He feels if she weren't there anymore, maybe things would be a little bit different. She denies that though.

BREAM: Well, and -- well, and -- of course.

MELUGIN: Yes.

BREAM: And if Republicans take over, they're going to have to put up some action for all the conversations they've had about this.

MELUGIN: Yes.

BREAM: Bill, thank you for joining us.

MELUGIN: Thanks for having me.

BREAM: Good to see you.

MELUGIN: Good to see you.

BREAM: And, by the way, you can see more of Bill's exclusive reporting throughout the day tomorrow all over Fox News Channel.